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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN POLITICAL PARTIES UNDERGO CHANGES TO PREPARE FOR 2006 ELECTIONS

IRPT HOLDS ROUNDTABLE TO DISCUSS REFORMS

¶1. (U) In a show of possibly implementing major party reforms, on December 20 the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) held a roundtable to solicit opinions from political scientists, government officials and other political parties on the role of the IRPT in society. The Democratic Party of Tajikistan's (DPT) Deputy Chairman voiced common criticisms of the IRPT and accused the IRPT of being useless in government. He blamed the party for not engaging parliament in a multi-party system, but rather succumbing to the voting wishes of the ruling People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT). Many speakers asked the IRPT to define more clearly their position.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: The roundtable's intent appeared progressive-minded, however during a break, IRPT Deputy Chairman Vohidkhon Qosiddinov casually remarked to PolOff that the IRPT did not intend to implement any reform suggestions. As it turns out, the roundtable was a token gesture of reaching out with no real intent to reform. END COMMENT.

¶3. (U) The close relationship between the IRPT and PDPT fuel critics' arguments that the PDPT uses the IRPT to create the pretense of multi-party support. President Rahmonov visited IRPT Chairman, Said Nuri, several times and provided financial support while Nuri was being treated for an undisclosed illness in Germany. After being ill for several months, Nuri is back in Tajikistan and has regained daily control over the IRPT from the moderate First Deputy Chairman Muhiddin Kabiri. Nuri, upon reevaluation of party officials' loyalty, dismissed several people and demoted others with more changes to come.

SDPT SCRAMBLES TO BOLSTER WEAKENING PARTY

¶4. (U) The SDPT, weak from government attacks and persecution, is trying to recoup their support in order to put forth an opposition candidate for next fall's presidential election. The December 17 SDPT congress elected Dilovarsho Jurayev and Dilbar Samadova deputy heads of the party. The SDPT persuaded Jurayev, a popular Rasht Valley politician, to join their party after he failed to register his own party, the Party of the National Heritage.

¶5. (U) The congress participants supported a decision to field a single candidate from opposition political parties in Tajikistan's November 2006 presidential elections; however, the IRPT has publicly stated they will not cooperate with the opposition political parties. The SDPT remains hopeful the IRPT will change its decision. To date, no parties have named a candidate because they fear government pressure.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: In an attempt to monopolize the political space, the government exerts control over political parties in two ways: luring them into cooperation, like with the IRPT and Communist Party of Tajikistan or defaming them, like the SDPT and DPT. The government's effective divide and conquer strategy has weakened the parties. Even if the parties were willing to cooperate, they will be unable to garner enough popular support for any candidate. END COMMENT.

ARMBRUSTER

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